Promises To Keep...

By BETTY GRANT

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From Cinderella to love-struck couples to candidates running for office; everyone is making promises they either will not or cannot keep. In the spirit or triumph of the moment maybe they were sincere in the belief that they would fully honor their word; but human frailty, like a cheap bottle of champagne, promises more than it can deliver.

We adults have not been good role models or teachers when it came to keeping our words. Maybe that is the biggest reason our children, especially our youth are having trouble keeping theirs. Not only do we fail to keep promises we make to them, we also fail to keep the ones we make to ourselves. How many times have we, intoxicated by the gaiety of a brand-new year, promised to lose weight, stop smoking, be on time for events, only to have these promises evaporate into thin air even before the holiday bell has stopped ringing completely?

I believe one of the most important promises that we, as a people and a society can make is to protect our children. We parents made this promise to our children when we brought them into this world. We honor this promise when we work to provide them with the safety and security they are entitled to. When some parents - for whatever reason(s) - are unwilling or unable to adequately care for their children; society, by its very nature, is obligated to step in and assist these children.

African Americans, in an earlier time in our history, recognized and honored the fact that each one of us had a moral and cultural responsibility to raise every one of our children regardless of whether we had a legal responsibility or not. In the south of my youth, communities helped parents to raise children. These parents could rest assured, knowing that if another grownup saw their children misbehaving or acting up, not only would they be taken to task, but the grownup would probably walk the child home and fill the parent in with all the colorful details.

To us southerners, the slogan "It takes a village" was more than an oft-quoted African proverb; it was a way of surviving poverty and racism. It was a way of doing business in our community and how the community functioned. However, it seems that lately, we as a people and a culture have gotten away from our long history of communal involvement in raising our children. It seems that all we want to do is look down our nose, click our surgically-implanted teeth and say, "I am only responsible for my own children." In essence, we have become mean, insensitive, and stingy. We have learned, and I say learned - because we did not use to be this way, to be selfish and judgmental. We have forgotten that as early as 30 years ago we were all pretty much in the same boat economically-speaking. We did not have much to share, but what we did have we shared willingly. Times have definitely changed. Those of us who 'hopped' on the Up escalator of affirmative action got off at the door of opportunity without looking back to make sure the escalator went back down so that another brother or sister could get a chance to ride up.

In a country as rich as this one, no child should have to go to bed hungry. But they do, each and every night. It happens in households in Buffalo as well as homes in the south. And all we do is click our teeth and mumble, "What a shame!" We have always been a loving and forgiving race of people. We are so quick to forgive others for injustices, past and present, done to us. And yet we are so quick to judge and condemn those within our own culture who are not as strong as we seem to be in resisting those destructive behaviors and habits that have almost brought this community to its knees. We go to church every Sunday, come back home and take off our Sunday clothes - and our morality! How else can we explain or rationalize the fact that we are letting AIDS destroy our race and refuse to discuss or recognize the issue because it is of a "sexual nature"?

We must feed our children who are hungry and clothe the ones who need them. We also must teach our adolescents through preventive education programs about abstinence and other safety measures if we want them to grow up - period.

Open Letter To The Community

New Year Means New Hope And Help For East Buffalo!

Take That First Step

Dear Editor:

I'm very concerned, to say the least, with the lack of concern people have towards others - especially young people. Some may say that they don't want to get involved, but the fact is you **already** are involved as long as you live in the community!

Things are so devastating; young people getting killed and dying on a daily basis for whatever reason(s) it may be. We as adults have played a big part in turning our backs on the problems and crises in our community. Through research and what I have observed, people are just plain afraid of one another. God is not pleased with the way people are throwing in the towel without a fight!

With the welfare reform in effect and the 21st century just 3 years away it's time to make a move for ourselves. It will be plain suicidal for today's generation to just sit around and do nothing to try to heal themselves. The Republicans as well as the Democrats have made the final call and that is: 'The lights are about to be turned out' because the party is over for giving. Remember, no one will keep doing something for you until you first do something for yourself. Over 50 years of celebration have come to an end. You are about to be freed from slavery forever, you'll have to go for yourselves from here on in.

I am establishing a foundation on the east side of Buffalo. This will go on long after I'm dead and gone. For the record, East Buffalo Tots & Teens Enterprise was founded in 1966 by myself, three years after I created the Buffalo Chicken Wing. It was designed exclusively for our young generation to get a jump-start on life, to try to work together by helping one another; some responded positively and others did not. So as of 1/1/97 I will be opening an office and information center, at 443 Broadway St. in Buffalo, to the public and you are cordially invited to come in at your convenience to discuss what you can do to help your offsprings. Your ideas and comments will be welcomed. There'll be a fundraising drive to help create jobs and businesses for people in east Buffalo.

Special thanks to a longtime friend and new business partner from Lackawanna/Buffalo for making this project possible.

- John Young

It does take a whole village to raise a child. And when we re-recognize the fact that your children are my children too, the whole community will be better off!

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